ECON7350/AEM7350
Topics in Public Economics

Spring 2016. Prerequisite: Basic graduate courses in ECON or AEM, or equivalent with Instructor’s permission. Class meets: Thursdays 7.00 pm-9.30 pm. Location: B02 Warren Hall.

This course is targeted to graduate students who have done the basic courses and are now looking to develop Doctoral or Masters thesis topics in public economics. It is not a standard "lectures plus written test" course. There will be lectures, but the core of the course is independent reading and research leading to a term paper. All those registered for the course will be required to do the term paper. In close interaction with me, each student will define and develop a specific topic, do a literature search and critical review, highlight some open questions for research and, hopefully, make some headway on one or more of these questions. The term paper is expected to be around 35 pages double space, all-inclusive, in length. There will be a presentation of the term paper to the class towards the end of the semester.

The overall plan for the semester is as follows. During the first weeks I will lecture on topics of interest to me, suggesting ideas for research and literatures for review. During the last weeks of the semester students will make presentations based on their term papers. In between, students will work independently on the papers, with frequent and structured interaction with me, requiring the submission of different drafts of the term paper. Office hours, during which students will come and discuss their work with me, form an important part of this course. Students are asked to contact my assistant Sue Snyder (sms237@cornell.edu, Tel: 254-8856) to fix up appointments.

Among the topics on which I will lecture are Voluntary Provision of Public Goods, Optimal Income Taxation, Regulation and Enforcement, Inequality Measurement.

The above themes are only suggestive topics for term papers, and are not meant to be restrictive. I will be happy to discuss with students topics for term papers that might fall outside this spread.

For readings on the first topic, students can look at the special issue of Journal of Public Economics, Volume 91, No. 9, September 2007, edited by James Andreoni and Ravi Kanbur. As will become clear, the "private provision of public goods" is a metaphor for a wider range of issues in public economics.

On the second topic, students are invited to look at: Ravi Kanbur and Matti Tuomala, “Charitable Conservatism, Poverty Radicalism and Inequality Aversion,” Journal of Economic Inequality, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 417-431, September 2011. This paper illustrates an important strand of welfare economics with interesting conceptual and policy dimensions.


On the fourth topic the following paper will give a flavor of my interests: Ravi Kanbur and Joseph Stiglitz, “Dynastic Inequality, Mobility and Equality of Opportunity,” [http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/research/researchpdf/wp/2015/Cornell-Dyson-wp1505.pdf](http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/research/researchpdf/wp/2015/Cornell-Dyson-wp1505.pdf)

Other readings will be distributed in class as appropriate.

**The Time Table for the semester is as follows.**

1/27 Office Hours 8am-4pm  
1/28 Office Hours 8am-4pm; Lecture 7pm-9.30 pm

2/3 Office Hours 8am-4pm  
2/4 Office Hours 8am-4pm; Lecture 7pm-9.30 pm

2/7 Deadline for submission of 2 page outline

2/10 Office Hours 8am-4pm  
2/11 Office Hours 8am-4pm; Lecture 7pm-9.30 pm

2/17 Office Hours 8am-4pm  
2/18 Office Hours 8am-4pm; Lecture 7pm-9.30pm

2/21 Deadline for submission of 5 page outline

3/2 Office Hours 8am-8pm  
3/3 Office Hours 8am-8pm

3/6 Deadline for submission of 10 page outline

3/9 Office Hours 8am-8pm  
3/10 Office Hours 8am-8pm

3/16 Office Hours 8am-8pm  
3/17 Office Hours 8am-8pm
3/20 deadline for submission of 20 page draft

3/23 Office Hours 8am-8pm
3/24 Office Hours 8am-8pm

4/3 deadline for submission of 35 page draft

4/6 Office Hours 8am-8pm
4/7 Office Hours 8am-8pm

4/13 Office Hours 8am-4pm
4/14 Office Hours 8am-4pm; Class Presentations 7 pm-10pm

4/20 Office Hours 8am-4pm
4/21 Office Hours 8am-4pm; Class Presentations 7pm-10 pm

4/27 Office Hours 8am-6pm
4/28 Office Hours 8am-4pm; Class Presentations 7pm-10 pm

5/4 Office Hours 8am-4pm
5/5 Office Hours 8am-4pm; Class Presentations 7pm-10pm

5/11 6pm. DEADLINE FOR FINAL SUBMISSION OF TERM PAPER. NO EXCEPTIONS. HALF GRADE PENALTY FOR EACH DAY OF DELAY.